

City of Alexandria Strategic Planning

Goal 1: There is Quality Development and Redevelopment, Support for Local Businesses, and a Strong, Diverse and Growing Local Economy

Public Comment

Commenter: Tina Leone, President/CEO, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

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Comment: The Chamber thanks the City Council and City Staff for placing strategic planning as a high priority for the City and for arranging a public forum. It is our hope that the Council will take deliberate action to construct a plan that serves the best interests of Alexandria in both the short and long term and takes immediate action to implement such a plan.

The Chamber has a number of development projects that rank high on its list of priorities. These range from the Waterfront, to the construction of a Metro Station at Potomac Yard, to a generalized increase of density around present and future public transportation hubs throughout the City. Each of these issues is of critical importance to the economic sustainability of the City.

However, when asked to prioritize its interests, the Chamber wishes to immediately address the 800 pound gorilla in the room, - and that beast is named PARKING.

The adequacy of parking- and the use of existing, available parking- presents a threshold issue that should be taken head-on in affirmative steps. The Chamber recommends that the City implement a short and long term strategy for the effective use of the City's inventory of parking spaces.

In conjunction with this approach to parking, the City should expedite efforts to improve the City's transportation infrastructure, including the creation of enhanced modes of public transportation such as the trolley and rapid transit.

These systems should link Metro Stations, parking garages and areas of interest to create transportation hubs around which denser, multi-use development may foster live-work environments.

This transportation and parking infrastructure will better position the City for future development of long range capital improvements and will make those sites far more desirable to developers, as well as residential and commercial end-users at a City-wide level.

Finally, it is time to recognize that the Waterfront and King Street represent the most immediate areas that require attention and improvement. Residents and visitors frequent these areas in large numbers- but the level of services are lacking and the impact of the current economy has left many King Street retail spaces dark and unappealing.

If Alexandria is to continue as a destination of choice, we must implement more user-friendly development and permitting standards as well as the recommendations of the King Street Retail Study to develop a world-class, multi-faceted waterfront.

These areas are geographically and economically linked - they deserve an integrated plan that complements the potential of the Waterfront with the revitalization of King Street.

Of course, these priorities will require funding. Bonds, tax increment financing and other creative funding solutions will be needed. However, these efforts will increase the commercial tax base, increase jobs and increase revenue from spending.

In conclusion, the Chamber urges the City Council to place Parking, Transportation and the Waterfront/King Street Retail Study at its highest priorities for the next five years.

Thank you.